



MARYLAND MILITARY COALITION

Serving Veterans through Legislative Advocacy

February 6, 2024

Honorable Marc Korman
Chair, Education, Energy and Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Subject: **Request for FAVORABLE Report** – HB411 – Department of Veterans Affairs – Renaming and Deputy Secretary of Military Family Policy and Programs

Dear Chair Korman and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the members of the Maryland Military Coalition (MMC) and as its President, I write to recommend a **FAVORABLE report** by the Committee on *SB0411 – Department of Veterans Affairs – Renaming and Deputy Secretary of Military Family Policy and Programs*, sponsored by Senator Gile.

This legislation is a critical component of Governor Moore’s commitment to make 2024 the Year of the Military Family in Maryland. As Governor Moore said in December 2023, “Our military families sacrifice everything so their loved ones can serve. They are just as much a part of the American story as those in the armed forces. . . . States have a duty to answer the service and sacrifice of our military families with strong support.”

Currently, Maryland is home to:

- 14,292 active-duty spouses
- 28,070 active-duty children
- 10,924 National Guard and Reserve spouses
- 17,095 National Guard and Reserve children
- 51,835 military retirees; and 6,348 survivors¹

Accordingly, there are a significant number of military family members in Maryland, with needs that the State can help address.

¹ * As of December 31, 2022, <https://public.militaryonesource.mil/state-policymakers-inquiry>

Renaming the Department is more than a symbolic act. It is a demonstration of Maryland's commitment to military families and developing policies and initiatives that address their concerns and needs. We strongly support creating a new position of Deputy Secretary for Military Family Policy and Programs. Establishing a Deputy Secretary focused on military families ensures that the military families' portfolio does not become an additional duty for the existing Deputy Secretary. Instead, the bill ensures that a senior official reporting directly to the Secretary is focused on the unique needs of military families. We anticipate that the new Deputy Secretary could become the state-wide focus for activities, research, outreach and support for spouses and military children. The MMC is excited about working with the new Deputy Secretary following enactment of the legislation.

The Maryland Military Coalition **strongly supports** HB0341 and asks for a ***FAVORABLE*** report from the Health and Government Operations Appropriations Committee. This bill supports the Moore-Miller Administration's Year of the Military Families, helping to move Maryland to the forefront of supporting those who serve alongside our Service Members.

The Moore-Miller administration has consistently supported transitioning Service Members and their families. This legislation goes a long way in demonstrating the administration's commitment to those currently serving, Veterans, retirees, their family members and their survivors.

The Maryland Military Coalition is a registered non-profit, non-partisan advocacy organization comprised of prominent Maryland-based veteran and military groups, representing over 150,000 service-connected individuals, including those currently serving, veterans, retirees and their families, caregivers, and survivors.

We want to thank Senator Gile for sponsoring this legislation and her personal commitment to support the uniformed services community including families, in Maryland.

Respectfully,



Jayson Spiegel
LTC USAR (Ret)
President

Member Organizations, Maryland Military Coalition

James P. Monahan
Air Force Sergeants Association

Steve P. May
American Military Society

Elwood R. Raphael Gray
American Minority Veterans Research Project

W. W. W.
Association of the United States Navy

Lynn A. Gask
Commissioned Officers Association of the
US Public Health Service

Wilbur B. Fisher
Disabled American Veterans

Seldon H. Freedy
Distinguished Flying Cross Association

Phyllis J. Collins
Fleet Reserve Association

Seldon H. Freedy
Jewish War Veterans of the USA

Steve L. Brooker
Maryland Air National Guard Retirees'
Association

Emmett R. Robert
Maryland Veterans Chamber of Commerce

Robert F. Winton
Military Officers Association of America

Charles E. Spahr
Military Order of the Purple Heart

E. E.
Montford Point Marines of America

M. L. Meese
National Association for Black Veterans

Michael P. Hays
Naval Enlisted Reserve Association

Christian Andreasen
NOAA Association of Commissioned Officers

John S.
Reserve Organization of America

Catherine L. McGraw
Society of Military Widows

E. E.
National Active and Retired Federal Employees
Veterans Affairs Directorate, NARFE MD

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Veterans of Foreign Wars